



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Telephone: 617 349 4683 Fax: 617 349 3116 TTY: 617 349 6112

E-mail: histcomm@cambridgema.gov URL: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic>



William B. King, *Chair*, Bruce A. Irving, *Vice Chair*, Charles M. Sullivan, *Executive Director*
M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert G. Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Frank Shirley, Jo M. Solet, *Members*
Shary Page Berg, Joseph V. Ferrara, Susannah Barton Tobin, *Alternates*

Date: September 2, 2016
To: Cambridge Historical Commission Members & Alternates
From: Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner
Re: D-1410: 54-56 Reed Street, Hayes Double House (1875)

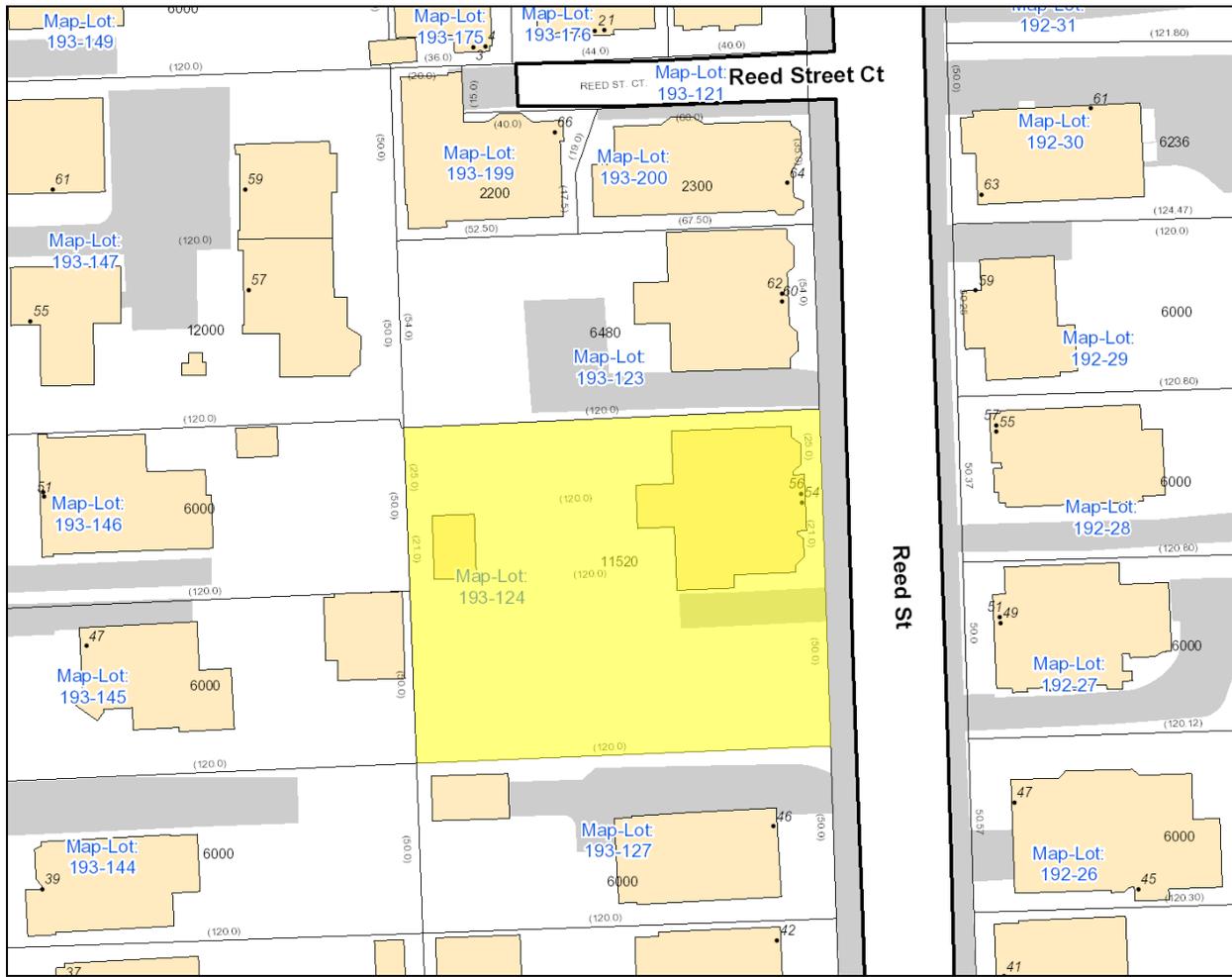
An application to demolish the double house at 54-56 Reed Street was received on August 15, 2016. The applicant, Joseph Glenmullen, was notified of an initial determination of significance, and a public hearing was scheduled for September 8, 2016.



54-56 Reed St., 2016, CHC photo

Description and Current Condition

The structure is a 2-story, flat-roofed frame dwelling located on the west side of Reed Street midway between Rindge Avenue and Dudley Street. The house sits on a double lot measuring approximately 11,520 square-foot (Assessor's Map 193/Lot 124). The Residence B district permits two-family construction and has a height limit of 35 feet and a Floor Area Ratio of 0.50 (0.35 FAR for that portion of the lot exceeding 5,000). The assessed value of the land and building (assessed as a three-family), according to the online assessor's property database, is \$942,300.



Cambridge GIS Map, 54-56 Reed St.

The double house is situated in the northeast corner of the lot, with a front setback of nearly 10' and a side setback on the north of only 3.4'. A driveway runs along the south side of the house. A small one-story wooden shed stands at the back of the lot. A matching double house is located immediately to the north at 60-62 Reed Street but it is covered with aluminum siding rather than wood shingles. The assessors describe the interior and overall condition of 54-56 Reed Street as average. Some of the wood shingles are split or missing but there are not major problems evident from an exterior viewing.

The soon to be new owner proposes to construct two Mansard-roofed buildings for a total of three units. The new double house would occupy the same portion of the lot as the existing. Two garages would be located at the back of the lot and would share a center driveway. Plans have been submitted to the file.

Architectural Description

The dwelling at 54-56 Reed Street is a flat-roofed Italianate side-by-side double house with centered entrance porch, projecting bays on the front elevation, and a narrow ell on the west (rear) side. A brick exterior chimney was added on the south side in 1982 for a wood stove. A bracketed cornice adorns the front elevation, but does not extend around to the sides of the house. The house was covered in wood shingles in the twentieth century but originally would have been clad in clapboards with narrow corner boards. Original window hoods remain over the two center windows on the

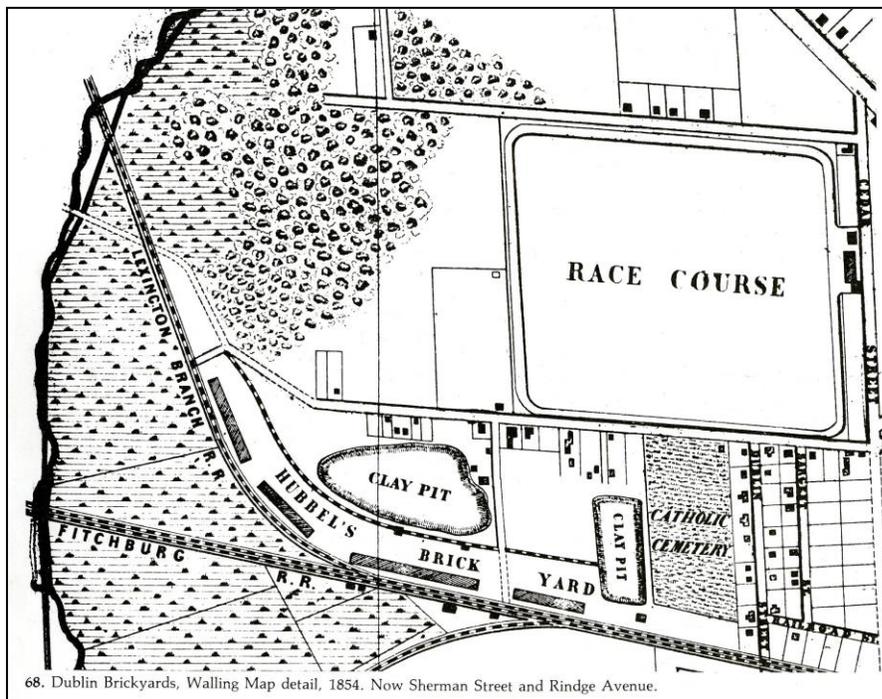
second floor. The porch is covered by a flat roof and supported by square chamfered posts. The foundation is brick and does not extend under the front bays. The windows are a mixture of the original 2-over-2 wood double hung sash and more recent vinyl insert units.

History

The 1842 extension of the Charlestown Branch Railroad from Miller's River to Fresh and Spy Ponds opened up North Cambridge for the brick industry and for suburban development. Several subdivisions were platted in the 1840s and early 1850s by owners of the brickyards to accommodate the mostly-Irish worker population.

By the mid-1850s most available land near the brickyards on Kidder's Lane (now Rindge Avenue) had been platted for residential development. The only remaining large parcel was the Race Course, fifty acres of flat land west of Cedar Street bounded by Harvey Street on the north and Rindge Avenue on the south. Opened in 1837, the Race Course operated on a seasonal basis during the 1840s, catering to cattle drovers and Cambridge traders. The one-mile track saw a variety of racing events, the most popular being horse trotting, which was a competition of the horses' endurance not just their speed. Transportation via omnibus was available from Harvard Square.

As the suburban population of North Cambridge grew, the Race Course area came increasingly under pressure for reuse. The flat land of the course was perfectly suited for residential development, and in 1855 owners Kidder and Reed divided the parcel into 275 house lots, the largest residential subdivision in North Cambridge. Five new north-south streets were created between Harvey Street and Rindge Avenue. From east to west, they were Reed, Montgomery, Clay, Jackson, and Clifton streets.



Detail of the Walling map of 1854, showing clay pits on the south side of Rindge Avenue. Reed Street would later be added opposite Sargent Street as part of a residential subdivision of the race course property.

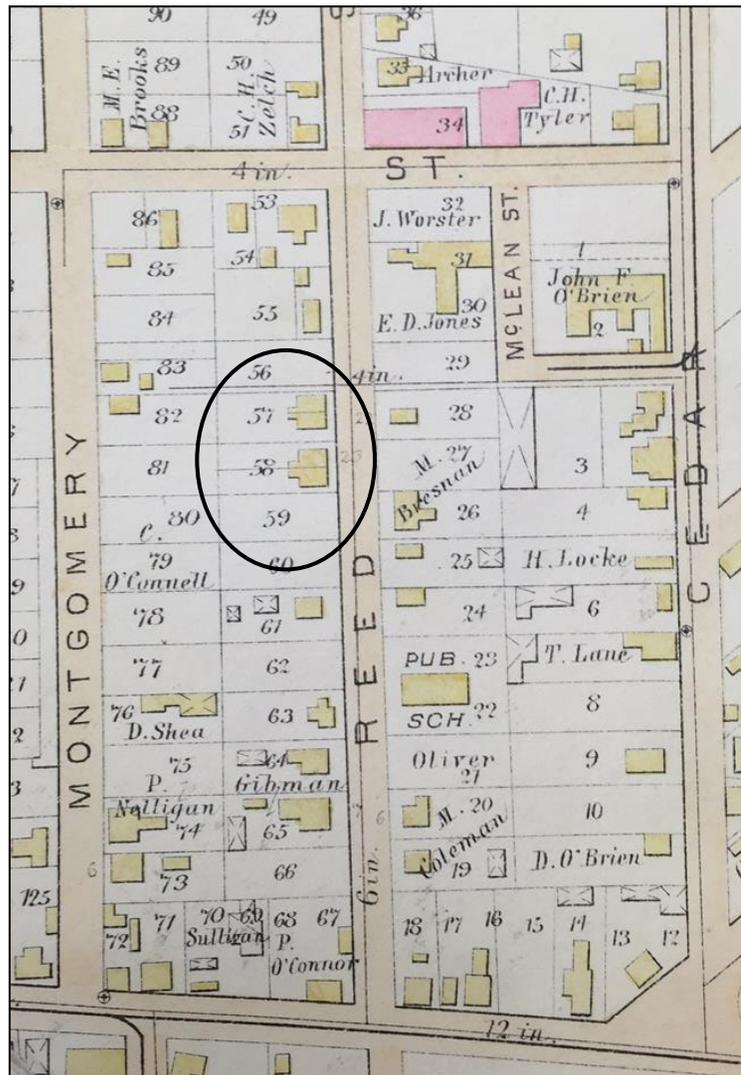
The house lots were first marketed to middle-class Irish in Boston and Charlestown, and half the lots were soon sold, but only three buyers built houses. Kidder & Reed found a much more receptive market when they redirected sales toward Cambridge brickyard laborers. The areas closest to the brickyards were the first to be developed. The interior streets, such as Reed and Montgomery streets, remained sparsely

populated until after the Civil War. A number of houses were built along Dudley Street when it was put through in 1870, but the Panic of 1873 abruptly terminated residential construction in the area. Another building boom occurred in the 1890s, when an influx of French Canadians arrived to work in the brickyards and other industries. Tract houses filled in the remaining empty lots on the site of the old Poorhouse between Cedar and Reed streets near Harvey Street, and on small courts.

Reed Street was named for Samuel G. Reed, half of the partnership Kidder & Reed who platted the subdivision in 1855. Most of the lots were 6000 square foot (50' wide x 120' deep) lots. The subject property was originally lots 58 and 59 of the subdivision. Lot 59 has never been built on, one of only a few such lots in the Race Course neighborhood.

John Hayes, a carpenter, and his wife Lizzie purchased lots 57 and 58 on Reed Street in 1875 from W. H. Durrell who had purchased the property the previous year from Samuel Reed. Hayes constructed the two double houses in 1875. Within a few years, the properties had been purchased by others. The north half of the property was purchased by tinsmith Michael Grimes and the south half and lot 59 by gardener Frank F. Green. The Green family later owned both sides of the building and the open lot to the south. They rented out the unit at #56.

The matching double houses at 54-56 and 60-62 Reed Street were constructed in 1875 by John Hayes. They are circled on this 1886 atlas view of the Race Course neighborhood.





Undeveloped Lot 59 on the south side of 54-56 Reed St., 2016, CHC photo

By 1908, 56 Reed Street had been divided into two units. Later residents of 56 Reed included brakeman James F. Fitzgerald, driver Enos B. Lyons, willow worker (furniture) William Wojcik, serviceman Walter Alley, and janitor George Greene. The property was sold to Howard B. and Louise Morrison in 1943. It passed by probate to Mary Starek, Theresa Sousa, Margaret Renzi, and Ann Moritz then sold to Joseph and Margaret Renzi in 1982. The Renzi family trustee is the current seller to developer Joseph Glenmullen.

Significance and Recommendation

John Hayes' double house at 54-56 Reed Street is an intact example of a double Bracketed Italianate house of the mid 1870s. Though not the predominant house style in the Race Course subdivision, the building retains its period detailing and contributes positively to the streetscape. It relates to the second phase of development in the Race Course subdivision.

It is the staff recommendation that the Commission find the house significant in terms of Chapter 2.78.080 of the Municipal Code, for its associations with the broad architectural, economic, and social history of the City. The proposed new construction should be evaluated and public testimony heard before making a further determination.

cc: Ranjit Singanayagam, Inspectional Services
James Renzi
Joseph Glenmullen